

Senate Panel Backs Pact To Curb Atom Weapons

Approval, 14 to 0, Clears the Way for
Floor Action — U.S. Ratification of
Treaty Is Expected Next Month

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 25 — The Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved without dissent today the treaty to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, clearing the way for probable American ratification next month.

The committee also moved toward adoption of a resolution designed to curb what it regards as a proliferation of foreign commitments by the United States. The sense-of-the-Senate resolution calls upon the executive branch not to enter into any further foreign commitments without the "affirmative action" of Congress.

The nuclear treaty was approved, 14 to 0, with Senator Thomas J. Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut, voting "present." Floor debate on the treaty is expected to start late next

week. Senate approval is regarded as certain.

With Senate approval, the Nixon Administration will be in a position to ratify the treaty next month, some nine months after the treaty was approved and signed by the United States.

The belated American ratification is expected to lead to approval of the treaty by the Soviet Union and some non-nuclear states, such as West Germany and Japan, that have expressed reservations about taking vows of nuclear abstinence.

Under the treaty, the nuclear powers pledge not to distribute atomic weapons and the nonnuclear states pledge not to acquire such weapons.

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The treaty goes into effect when it has been ratified by the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union plus 40 other nations—a point that the State Department now expects will be reached by next fall. Thus far the treaty has been signed by 87 nations but ratified by only nine, including Britain.

Submitted by Johnson

The treaty was submitted to the Senate last July by President Johnson. The committee approved it for the first time last September, 13 to 3, with three Senators abstaining.

Despite considerable prodding by the Johnson Administration, however, the Senate Democratic leadership put off consideration last year after President Nixon, then the Republican Presidential nominee, said that immediate ratification would be untimely in view of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

On the basis of the vote today, it was apparent that much opposition to the treaty had evaporated, particularly among Republicans, now that President Nixon has taken the position that ratification would advance his policy of negotiation rather than confrontation with the Soviet Union.

The only opposition now is expected to come from such Republican conservatives as Barry Goldwater of Arizona, Strom Thurmond of South Carolina and John G. Tower of Texas.

But the Administration is now confronted with a Foreign

Relations Committee that is taking a closer, more critical look at the treaty's terms and thus raising questions that the State Department and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency would have preferred be left unasked.

Much of the committee's discussion today, for example, centered on whether, under Article III, the United States could give nuclear assistance to a country that did not accept the treaty or refused to place all its atomic activities under international inspection, and whether Article VI obligated the United States to enter into arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union.

Article III specifies that a nuclear power may not furnish atomic assistance to any non-nuclear-weapons state unless that state has accepted International Atomic Energy Agency inspection over all fissionable material in all its nuclear facilities. Left unclear is whether the nonnuclear-weapons state must also be a signatory to the treaty.

Article Calls for Talks

Under Article VI, the nuclear powers undertake to enter into "good faith" negotiations to curb the atomic arms race.

For its own diplomatic bargaining purposes, both with the Soviet Union and some of the reluctant nonnuclear states, the Administration would have preferred that the United States interpretation of the two articles be left somewhat ambiguous. But now that the questions have been raised, the committee, in its report on the treaty next week, is expected to offer far stricter, more binding

interpretations than the Administration desires.

By approving the treaty at this time, committee members, such as Senator George D. Aiken of Vermont, the ranking committee Republican, believed they had strengthened President Nixon's hand on his current European trip in persuading Western European countries to sign and ratify the treaty.

Action Is Postponed

Partly to avoid embarrassing the President during his trip, however, the committee decided to postpone action on what has come to be known as "the national commitments resolution." Senator Aiken first moved to report out the resolution, but it was then decided to postpone action until Secretary of State William P. Rogers could present the Administration's views.

Partly in reaction to the Vietnam war and partly because of a desire to reassert Senate authority in making foreign policy, the committee approved about two years ago a sense-of-the-Senate resolution calling upon the executive branch not to commit American troops to foreign hostilities without positive approval by Congress.

Ready for action by the committee, now, however, is a much broader resolution calling upon the executive branch not to enter into any foreign commitment, military or non-military, without first obtaining "affirmative action" by Congress, such as through approval of a treaty or convention.